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Sam the Minuteman



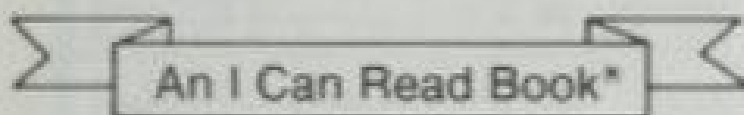
by Nathaniel Benchley
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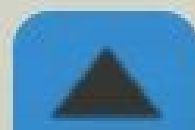
SAM THE MINUTEMAN



BY NATHANIEL BENCHLEY
PICTURES BY ARNOLD LOBEL



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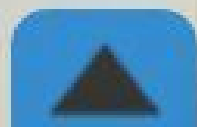
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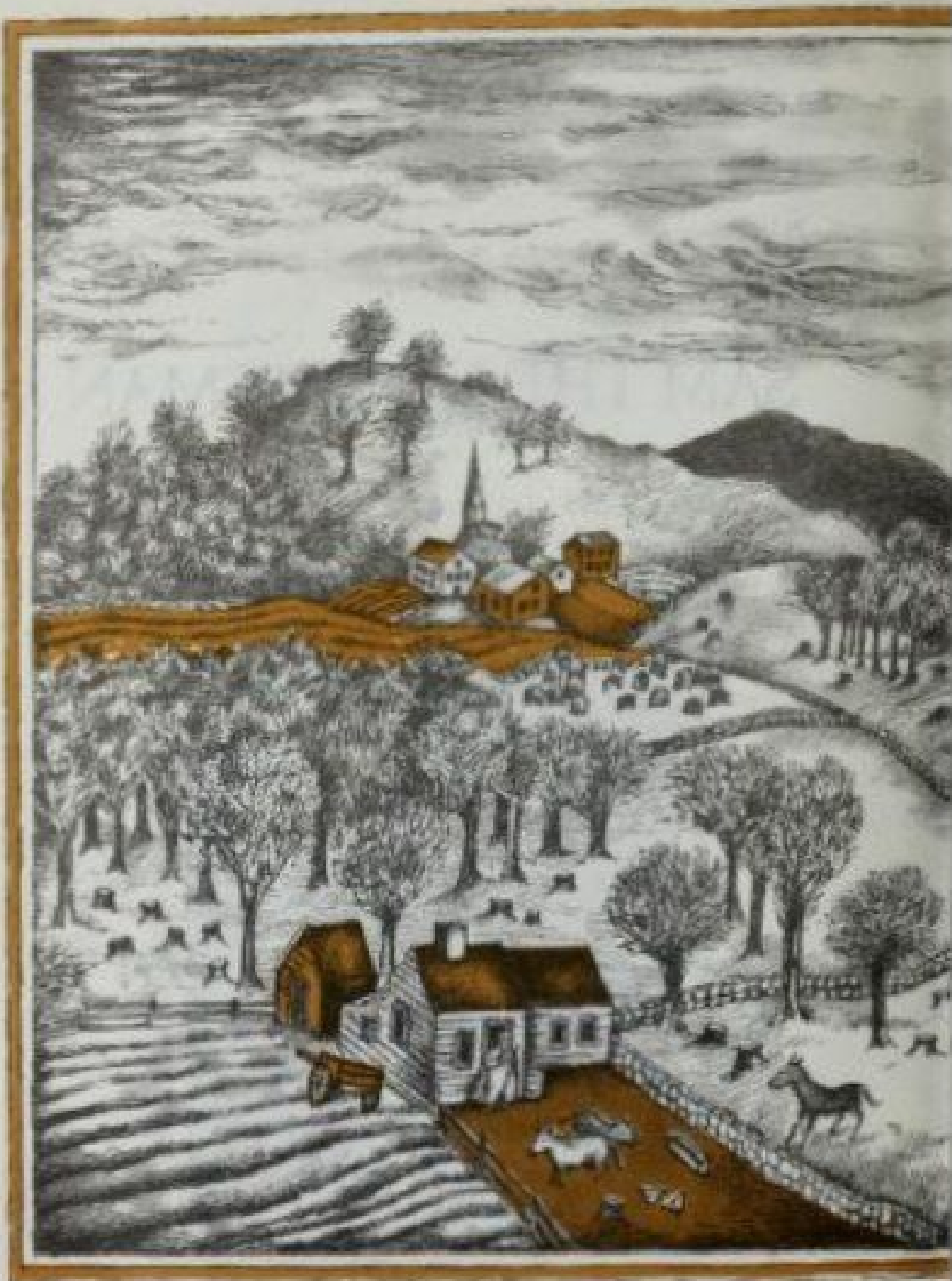
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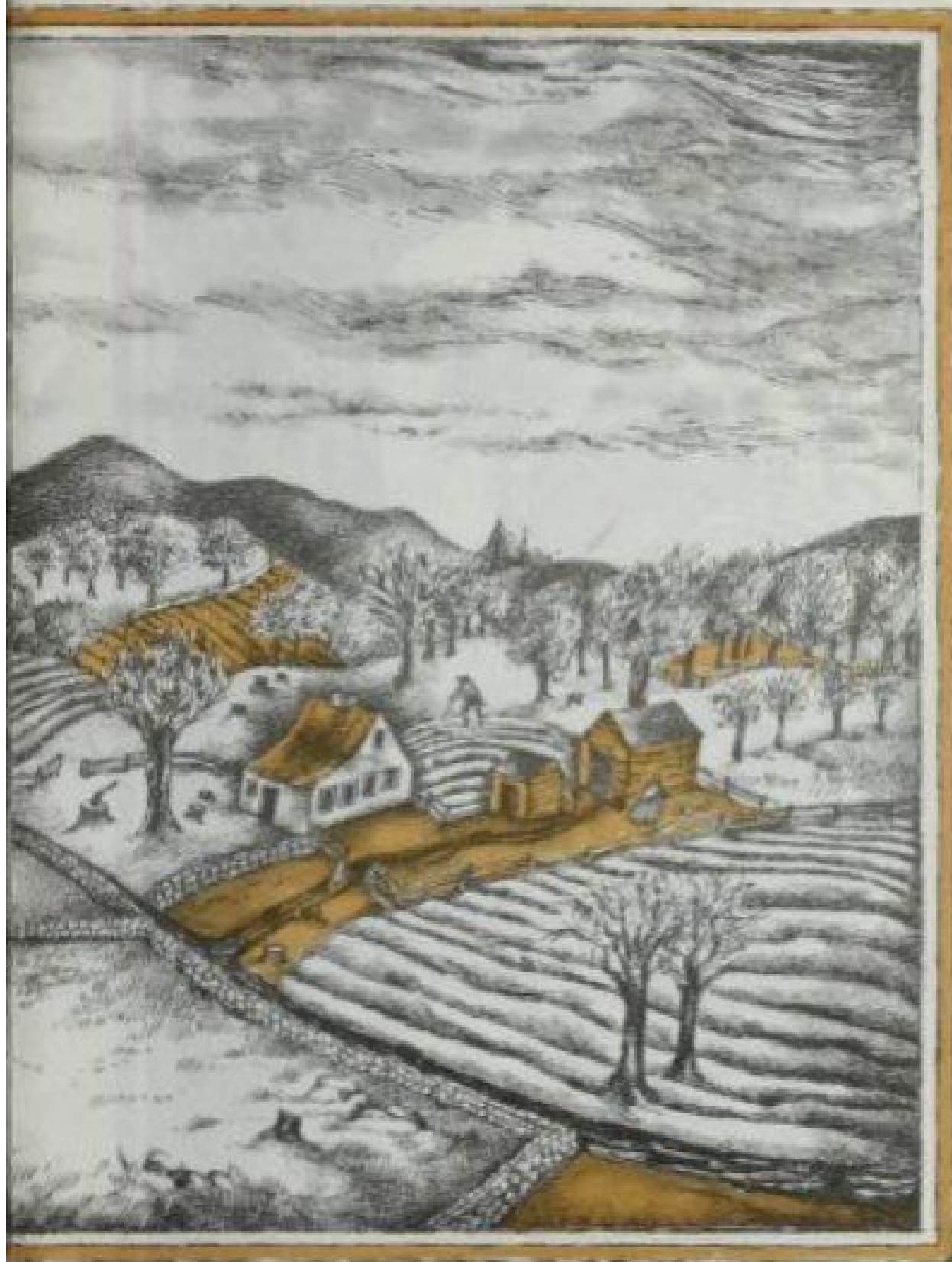
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SAM THE MINUTEMAN









About two hundred years ago
a boy named Sam Brown
lived with his parents on a farm
in Lexington, Massachusetts,
near Boston.

At that time, America
was not a country of its own.
It belonged to England.





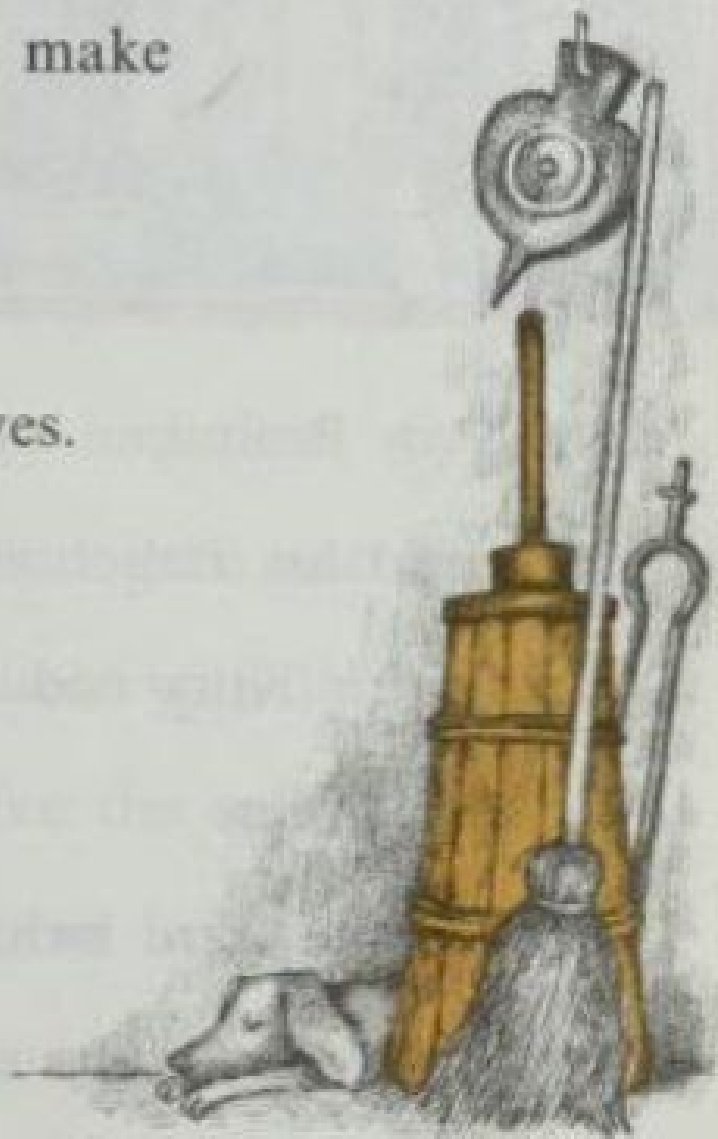
The farm was small,
and the earth was rocky.



Sam and his father did most
of the outdoor work together.



Sam's mother worked indoors.
Everything they needed,
they had to make
or grow
or cook
for themselves.

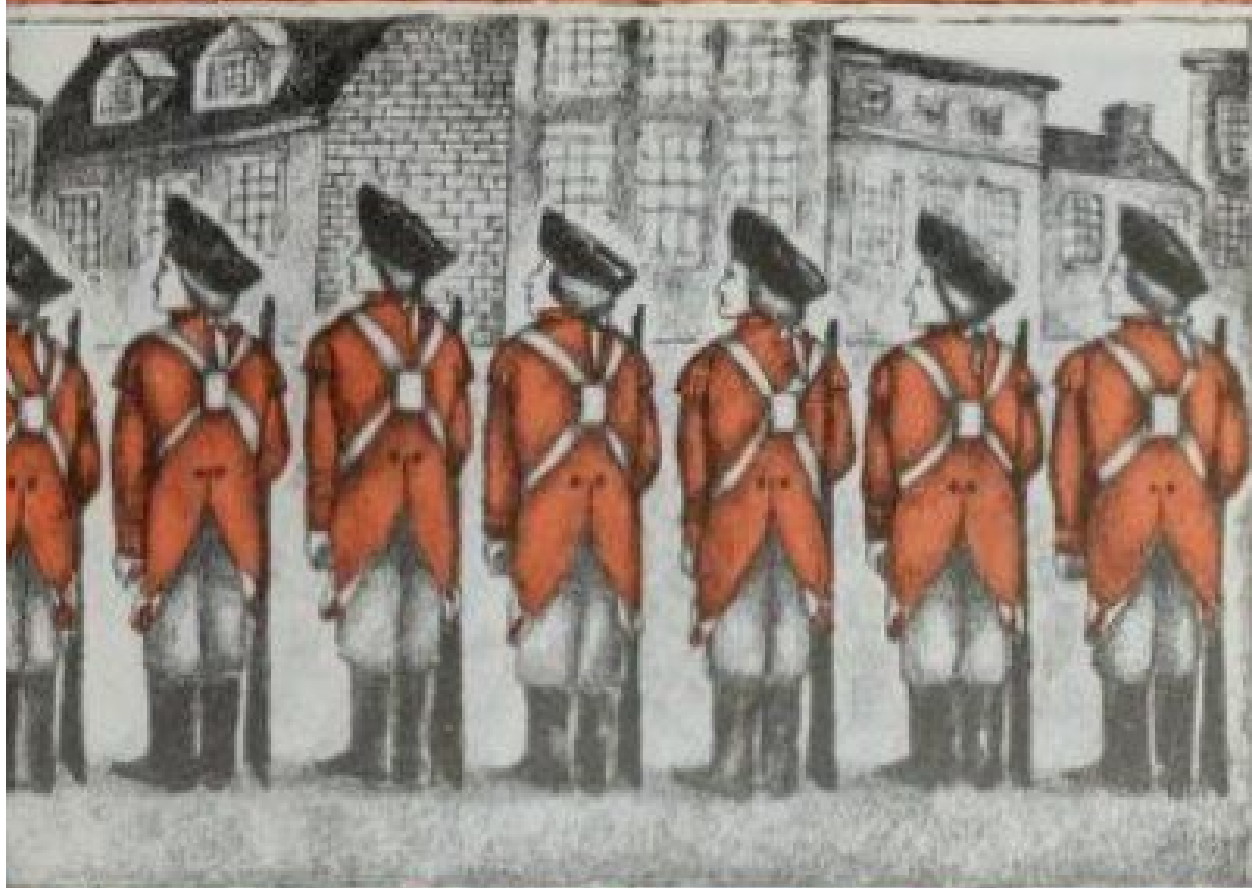




Once, in Boston,

Sam and his father saw the soldiers
the British King had sent
to keep order.

The people were unhappy
with the way things were being run.

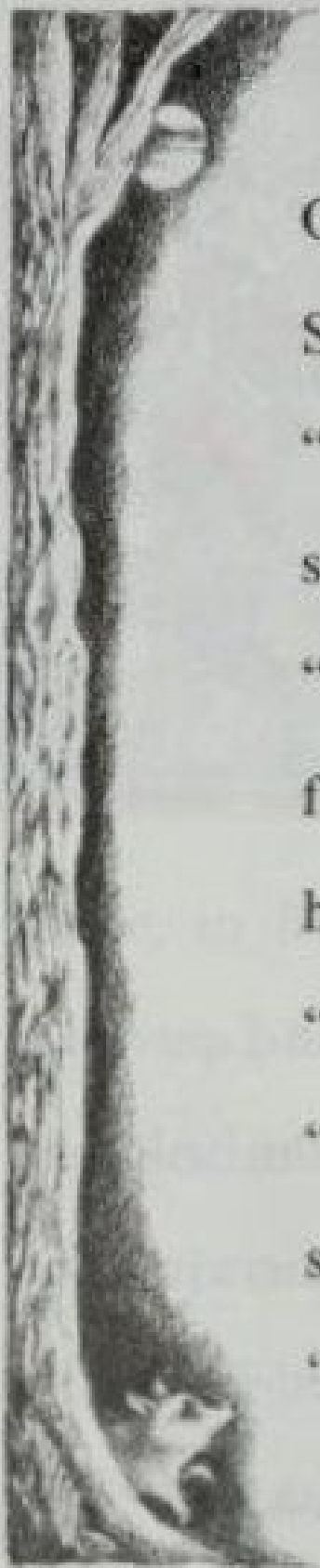


Sometimes they had riots.

Some people hid guns and powder
in case of trouble with the soldiers.

They didn't like the soldiers much.

They called them Lobster Backs
because of their red coats.



On their way home,

Sam asked,

“What do these
soldiers want?”

“They want to keep us
from being too strong,”
his father said.

“They are afraid of us.”

“That makes us even,”
said Sam.

“I’m afraid of them.”





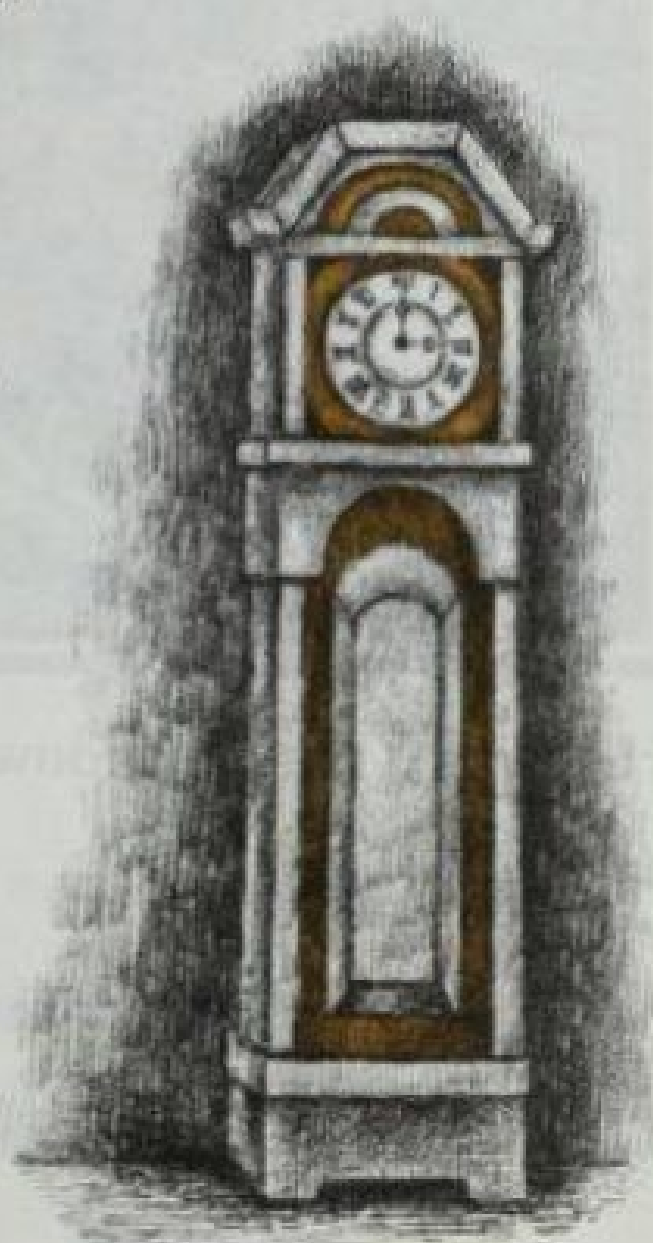
One night in early spring

Sam was awakened by the sound
of church bells ringing.

“What’s this?”

he thought.

“It can’t be
Sunday yet!”



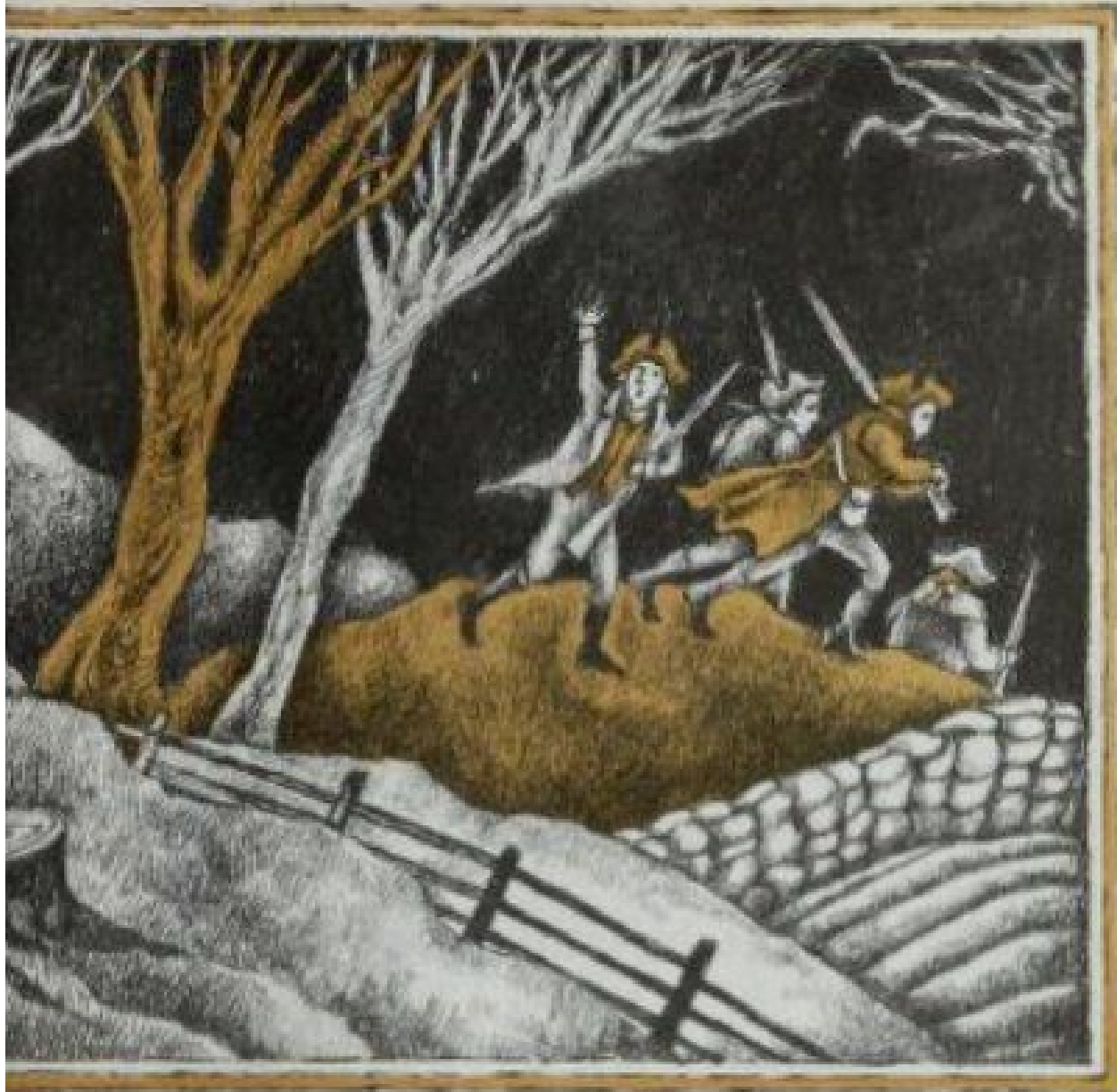


He went to the window.

In the darkness

he could see men running.

They seemed to come from everywhere.



He heard the voices
of his father and his mother.
His mother sounded frightened.
Sam knew there was trouble.

He dressed quickly
and went downstairs.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"Go back to bed," his mother said.

"No," said his father.

"We need everyone we can get."

His father was a Minuteman,

which meant he had to be

ready for trouble

at a minute's notice.

"Get your gun, Sam," he said.

"Why?" asked Sam.

"What's happening?"





"Nobody knows for sure,"
his father said.

"The British have left Boston
and are coming this way."

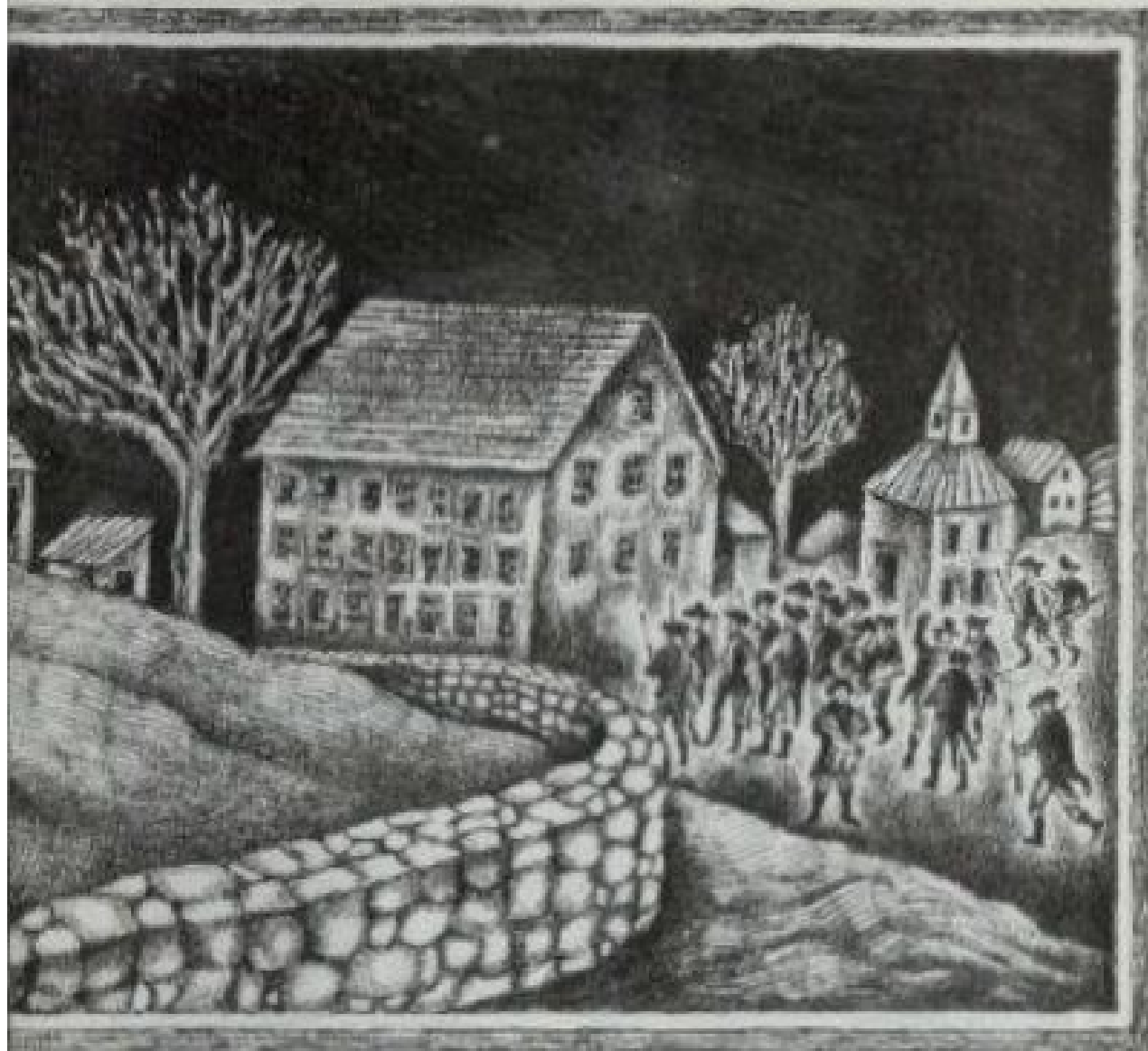
"Who told you?" asked Sam,
hoping it wasn't true.

"Paul Revere," said his father.

"Now get your gun."



So Sam got his gun
and followed his father
through the darkness
to the village green.



The bells were still ringing,
and a drum was making
a rattling noise.

Sam felt cold and afraid.



Captain Parker,
the head of the Minutemen,
told them to line up
near the meeting house.
Sam saw his friend John Allen.
John looked the way Sam felt,
which made Sam feel better.
“Why are the British coming?”
Sam asked.
“They want the guns and powder
hidden in Concord,” said John.
“They have to come past here
to get them.”



Slowly, it began to get light.
The drums and the bells stopped.
It was so quiet
that Sam could hear the birds
twittering in the trees.
He could smell the apple blossoms



and feel the wet dew on the grass.

"Maybe they won't come, after all,"
he said to John.

"Maybe they'll go another way."

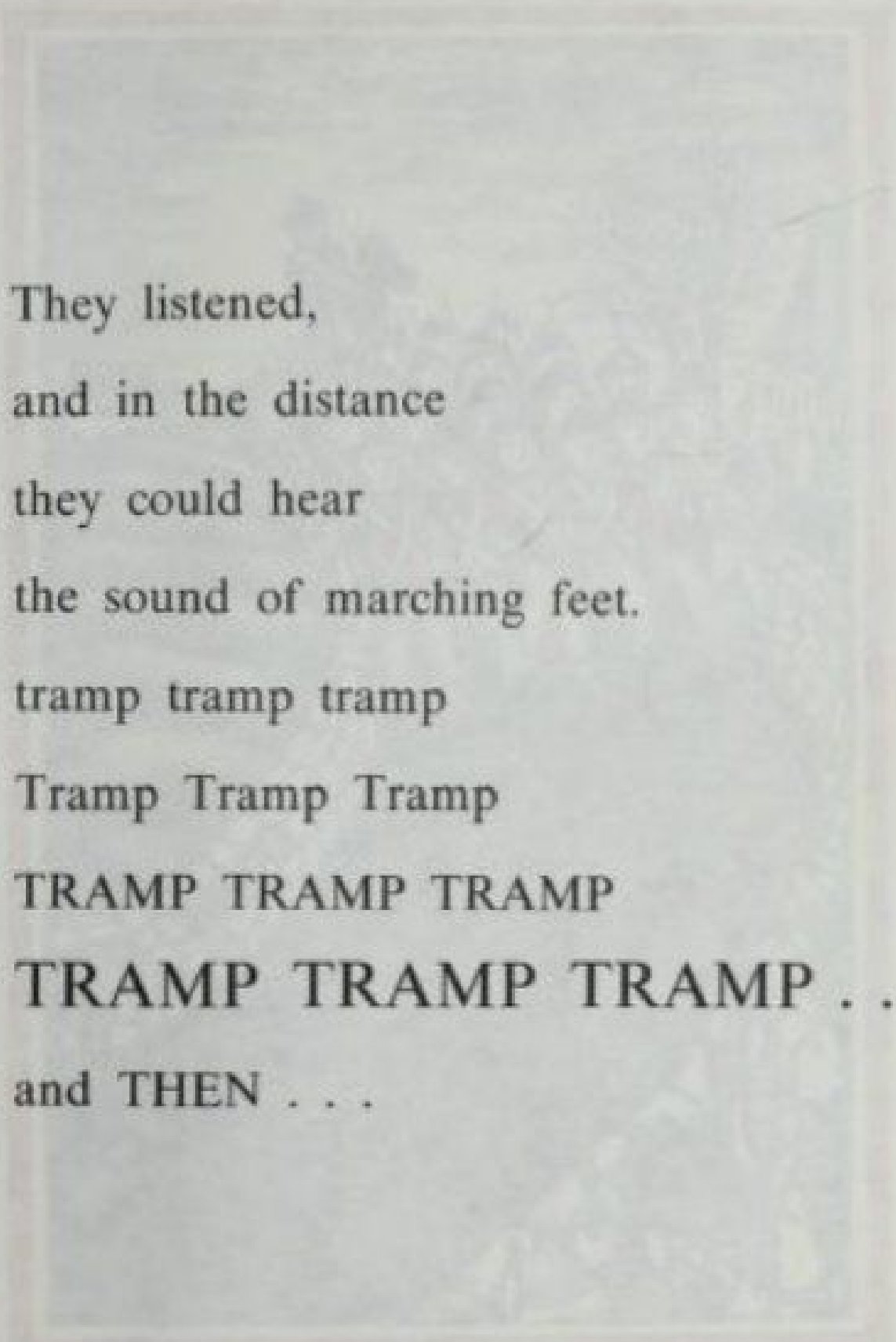
"Maybe," said John.

"But not likely."

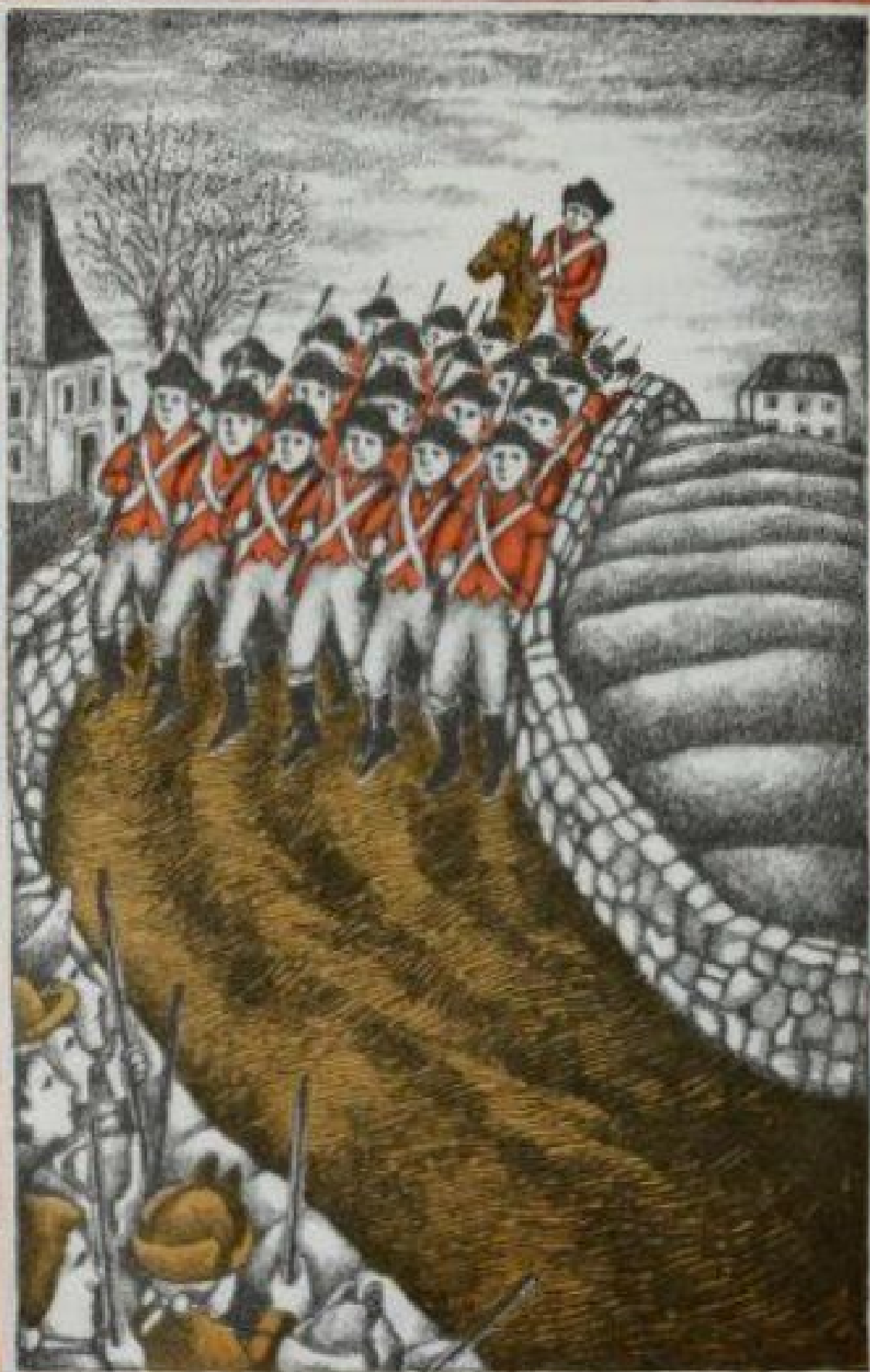
Then it was daylight,
and the men began to relax.
Some of them even yawned.
Sam's father talked with friends.
Sam and John played games
with a knife in the grass.
Sam wished
he had eaten breakfast.
Suddenly John said,
"Listen!"







They listened,
and in the distance
they could hear
the sound of marching feet.
tramp tramp tramp
Tramp Tramp Tramp
TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP
TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP . . .
and THEN . . .



Over the hill
and past the tavern
came the soldiers!
They came on and on and on.
Sam could see their red coats
and the sun glinting
on their bayonets.
They looked like
a bright river of red.





As they came closer,
Captain Parker tried to count them.
There seemed to be a thousand.
And he had only eighty Minutemen.
“There are too many of them,”
he said.



"We had better move away."

"I'm all for that,"

said Sam.

"I think I'll get on home."

"Me too," said John.

"There's nothing I can do here."

Sam and John and their fathers
and the other Minutemen
began to move off.

"I'll see you after breakfast,"

Sam said to John.

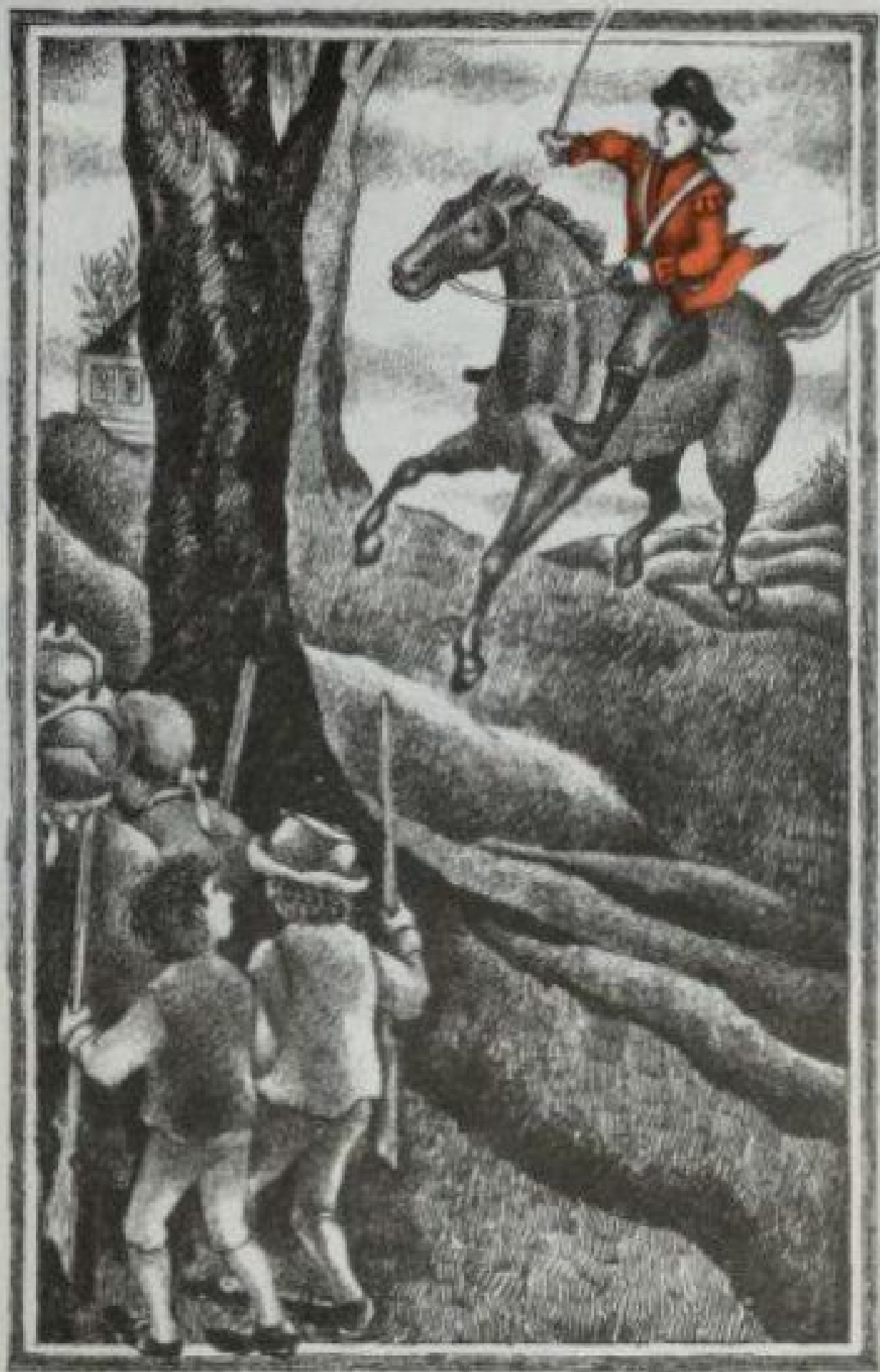
Then he saw a British officer
who was shouting
and waving his sword.

"I wonder what he wants," Sam said.

"He told us to disperse," said John.

"I'm dispersing as fast as I can,"
said Sam.

"He doesn't need to shout."





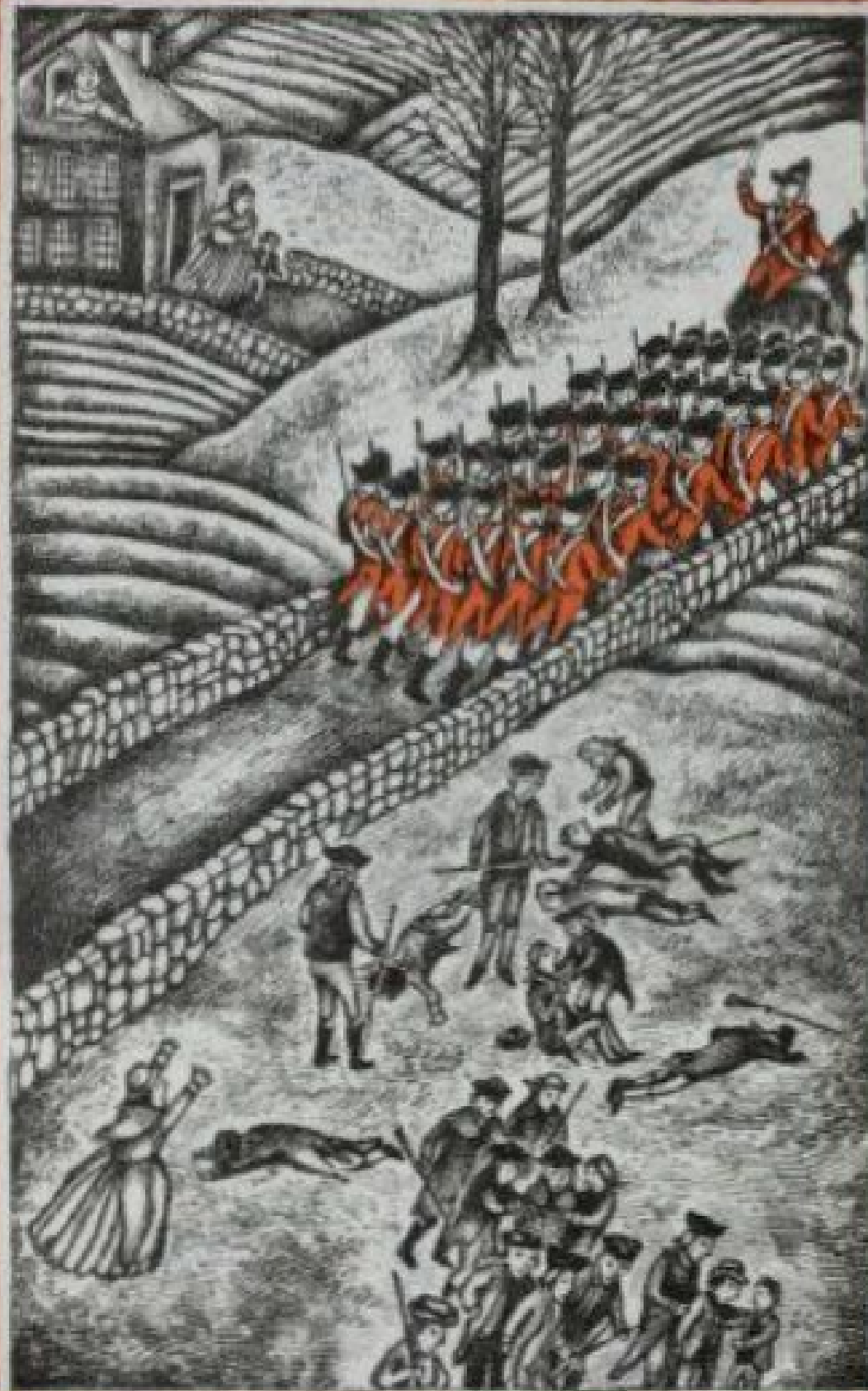
Then someone, somewhere,
fired a gun—BANG!
The troops began to shoot.



Minutemen fell all around.

"Sam!" John cried. "I'm hit!"

John held his leg and fell down.



The British officer
made his troops stop shooting
and got them back in line.
He marched them off
toward Concord,
leaving eight dead Minutemen.



Sam and his father
helped John's father
take him home.

Sam felt he was having
a bad dream.

He saw John's mother crying
as she put a bandage
on his leg.

"How does it feel?" Sam asked.

"Not too good," said John.





When Sam and his father
got to their house,
all Sam's fear changed to anger.
"How did they dare do that?"
he cried.
"If they come back,
I'll shoot them—every one!"

"Be quiet," his father said,
washing the grit and powder
off his face.

"You may just have that chance."

"He will not,"
said his mother.

"He doesn't leave this house again."





Then the bells began to ring again!

The troops were coming back!

"Sam, you stay here!" said his mother.



But Sam had already grabbed his gun
and run outside.

His father followed close behind.



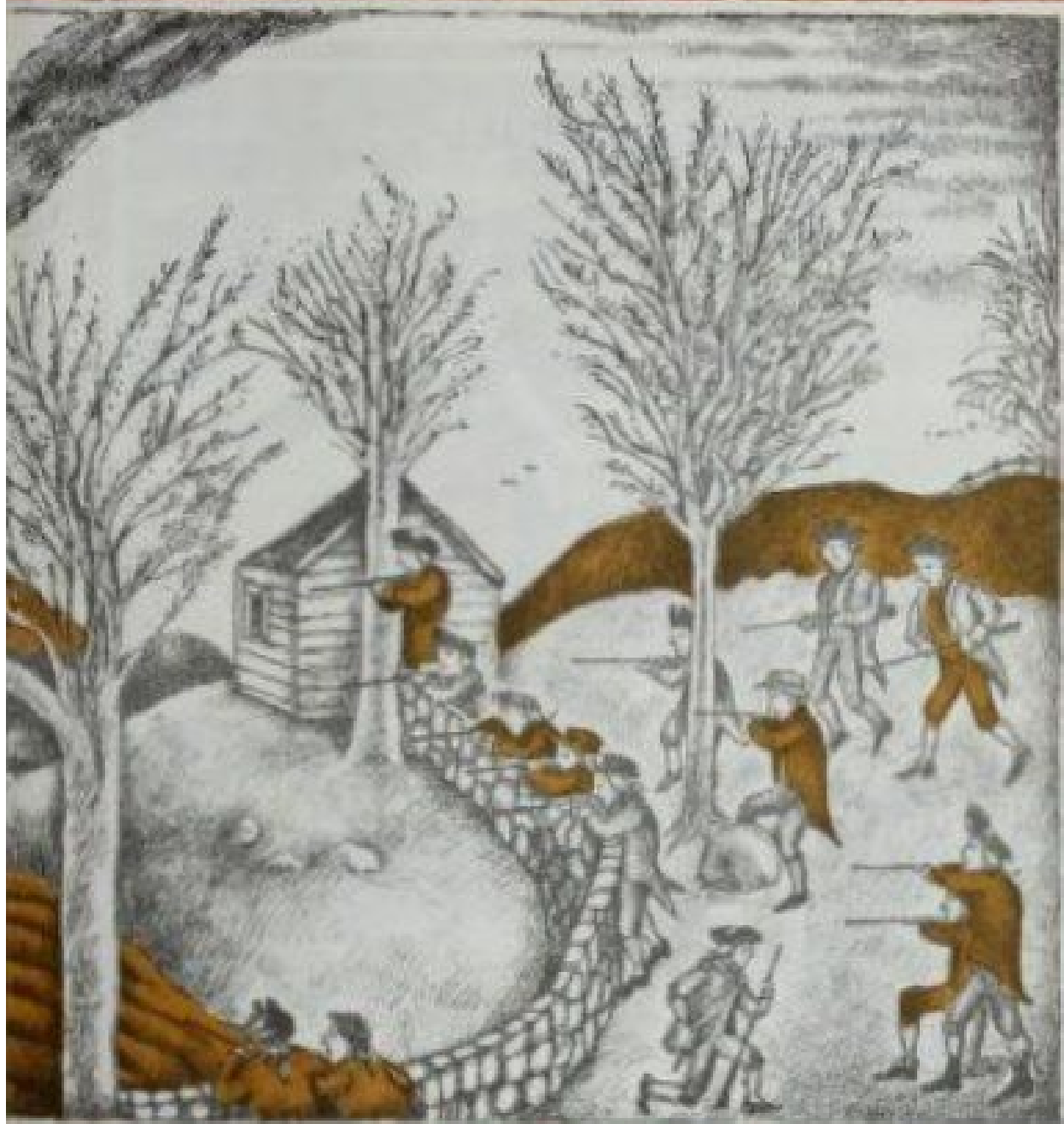
By now
more farmers had come
from all around.
They were shooting
at the soldiers
as they marched.
They never got in close
but fired from behind rocks
and trees.

This worked better
than meeting
in the open.



Then more British troops
came out from Boston.

For a while the battle was quite heavy.



The British troops
burned some houses,
but their hearts weren't really in it.

Soon they headed back
to Boston,
followed on all sides
by the farmers,
whose bullets buzzed about like bees.







Late that night

Sam and his father got back home.

The rain was falling gently.



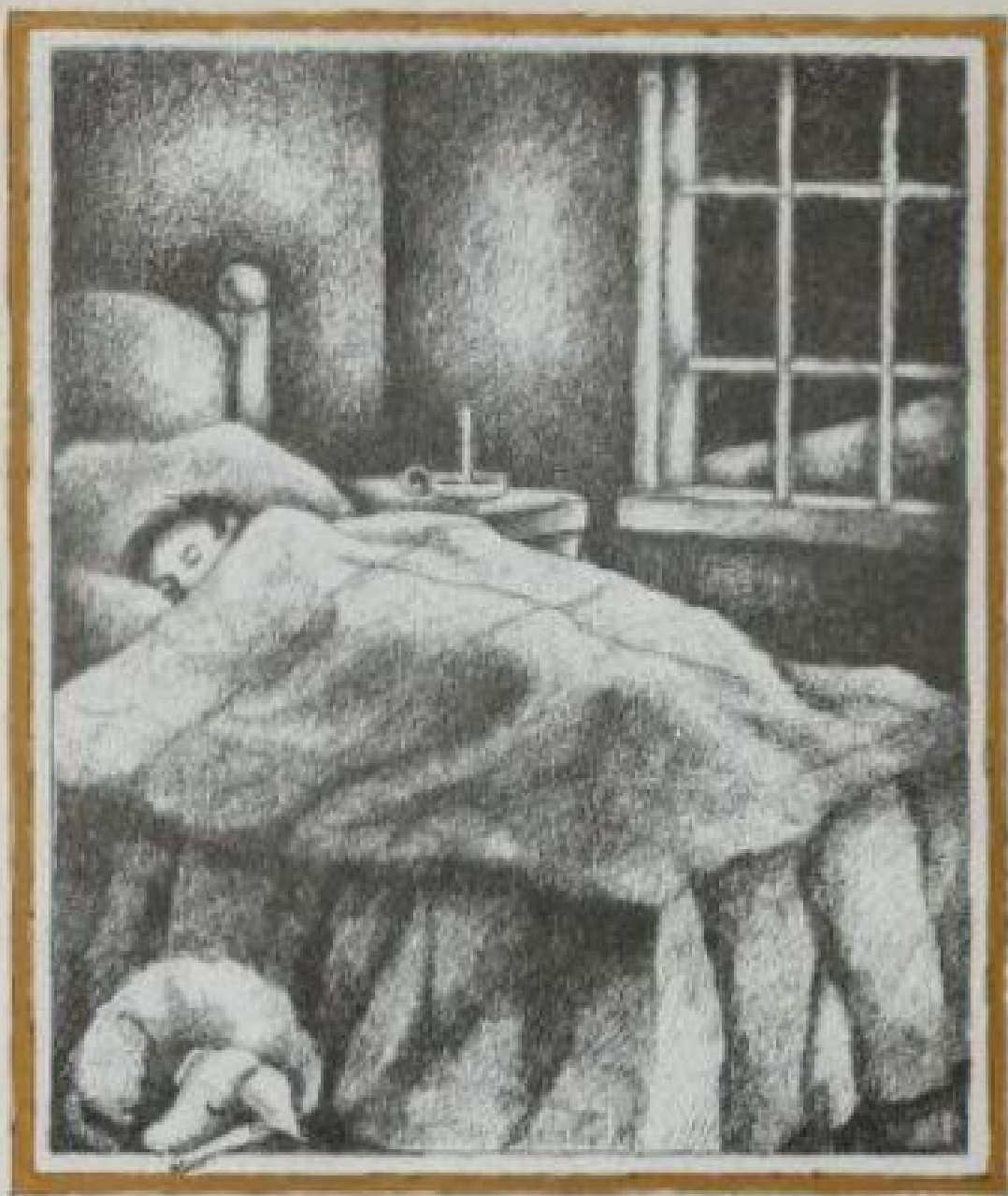
“Where have you been?”

Sam’s mother said.

“I’ve been worried sick about you.”



But Sam was too tired to answer.
All he wanted to do now was sleep.
No one knew it then,
but that day was the start
of the American Revolution.
The war lasted eight years.
At the end,
America was a country on its own.
But Sam didn't think of that.
He thought of John
and wondered how he was.



And then he slept.

NATHANIEL BENCHLEY was born in Newton, Massachusetts. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy and was graduated from Harvard College in 1938. From 1941 to 1945, Mr. Benchley was in the United States Navy (antisubmarine warfare). For more than 30 years afterward, he wrote articles, stories, novels, and plays. He has written many books for young readers, including 9 other I Can Read Books.

ARNOLD LOBEL was born in Los Angeles, California; grew up in Schenectady, New York; and was graduated from Pratt Institute in New York City. He is the well-known author-illustrator of *Martha the Movie Mouse* and many other books for young readers. His I Can Read Books include the Caldecott Honor Book *Frog and Toad Are Friends* and the Newbery Honor Book *Frog and Toad Together*. His *Fables* received the Caldecott Medal.

**Other I Can Read Books written by Nathaniel Benchley
and illustrated by Arnold Lobel**

Oscar Otter

Red Fox and His Canoe

The Strange Disappearance of Arthur Cluck

One night Sam is awakened
by the sound of church bells
ringing.

"Get your gun, Sam,"
says his father.

"The British have left Boston
and are coming this way."

This is the story of the first battle
of the American Revolution.



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